

show her to have been one of his closest and most successful followers. Furthermore, other comparisons suggest that she was also influenced by the work of his brother, Dirck Hals (1591–1656). Should Leyster have been in either of their studios, it would seem that she would have been there prior to 1629, the year she starts to sign and date her paintings, and probably before 1628, when Ampzing implies that she was working as an independent artist.

In the years following her return to Haarlem, Judith Leyster achieved a degree of professional success that was quite remarkable for a woman of her time. By 1633 she was a member of the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke, the first woman admitted for which an oeuvre can be cited, and in 1635 she is recorded as having three students. One of these, Willem Woutersz., subsequently defected to the studio of Hals, presumably without adequate warning, for Leyster went before the Guild of Saint Luke in October 1635 to make a (successful) demand for payment from Woutersz.'s mother.

In 1636 she was married to Jan Miense Molenaer (c. 1609/1610–1669), a fellow artist and at times close follower of Hals. The couple subsequently moved to Amsterdam, where they lived until 1648. She painted very little after her marriage. In October of 1648 the couple bought a house in Heemstede, near Haarlem, but continued to make regular visits to Amsterdam, where they had another house, and also to Haarlem. Leyster died in 1660 and was buried in Heemstede on 10 February.

Stylistically, much of her work resembles that of Frans Hals. Her brushwork is quite free and spontaneous, and she favored the same types of subjects and compositions, notably energetic genre scenes depicting one or two figures, often children engaged in some kind of merrymaking. In addition to these compositions, Leyster also painted still lifes. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between her early works and the works of her husband, a problem that is aggravated by the fact that they often shared studio props and models, and may even have worked on each other's pictures.

#### Notes

1. Ampzing's text is known to have been written prior to 1 February 1627. His discussion of Judith Leyster occurs in the context of his comments on the artistic achievements of the De Grebber family. Hofrichter 1989, 14, raises the possibility that he placed Leyster here because she was at that point studying with Frans Pietersz. de Grebber (1573–1649).

#### Bibliography

Ampzing 1628: 370.  
Schrevelius 1648: 290.  
Harms 1927.  
Hofrichter 1975.  
Philadelphia 1984: 233–235.  
Hofrichter 1989.  
Brown/MacLaren 1992: 226.  
Haarlem 1993.

1949.6.1 (1050)

### Self-Portrait

c. 1630

Oil on canvas, 72.3 x 65.3 (29 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ )

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss

**Technical Notes:** The support, a plain-woven fabric with numerous slubs and weave imperfections, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. A large horizontal rectangle of original canvas is missing from the bottom left in an area corresponding to the red skirt, and has been replaced with a fine-weight, tightly woven fabric insert. The x-radiograph (fig. 1) shows cusping along all edges except the insert, which is also bereft of original paint or ground layers.

A smooth, thin, white ground layer was applied overall and followed by a gray brown imprimatura layer. Paint handling varies from fluid paint applied in loose liquid strokes in the black peplum, to thicker pastes blended wet into wet in the flesh tones. White cuffs were applied wet over dry above the thinly scumbled purple sleeves, and red glazes laid over opaque pink underpaint in the original passages of the red skirt.

Infrared reflectography reveals a major change in the easel painting, which originally showed a woman's head, with parted lips, turned slightly to the left, now partially visible as a pentimento. With the exception of the loss in the lower left, actual paint losses are few: small losses in the top at center and in the proper left cheek. The paint surface, however, is in poor condition, with minute pitting throughout of the type caused by superheating during a lining procedure, exacerbated by moderate abrasion overall, and flattening. The unfinished violin player on the easel is heavily abraded.

The painting was treated in 1992 to remove discolored varnish layers and old retouching. The later insert was retained.

**Provenance:** E. M. Grainger, Hastings, Sussex. (Sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 16 April 1926, no. 115, as Judith Leyster); private collection or art market, Paris, 1927. (Ehrich Galleries, New York, in 1928); purchased 1929 by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, Washington.

**Exhibited:** *A Century of Progress Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture*, Art Institute of Chicago, 1933, no. 64 (as Frans Hals). *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, 1937, no. 22 (as Frans Hals). *Frans Hals Tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het 75-jarig bestaan van het gemeentelijk Museum te Haarlem*, Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem, 1937, no. 9 (as Frans Hals). *Paintings by Frans Hals:*

*Exhibition for the Benefit of New York University*, Schaeffer Galleries, New York, 1937, no. 3 (as Frans Hals). *People at Work: Seventeenth Century Dutch Art*, Hofstra Museum, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, 1988, no. 11. *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World*, Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem; Worcester [Massachusetts] Art Museum, 1993, no. 7. *Judith Leyster: "Leading Star,"* National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, 1993–1994.

AS SHE TURNS from her painting of a violin player and gazes smilingly out at the viewer, Judith Leyster manages to assert, in the most off-handed way, that she has mastered a profession that had traditionally been a masculine domain. While women drew and painted as amateurs, a professional woman painter was a rarity in Holland in the seventeenth century. Leyster was quite a celebrity even before she painted this self-portrait in about 1630. Her proficiency, even at the tender age of nineteen, had been so remarkable that in 1628 Samuel Ampzing had singled her out for praise in his *Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem in Holland* some five years before she appears to have become the first woman ever to be admitted as a master in the Haarlem Saint Luke's Guild.<sup>1</sup> Even after 1636, when she moved to Amsterdam with her husband, the artist Jan Miense Molenaer, her artistic reputation remained intact in her native city. In the late 1640s another historian of Haarlem, Theodorus Schrevelius, wrote that

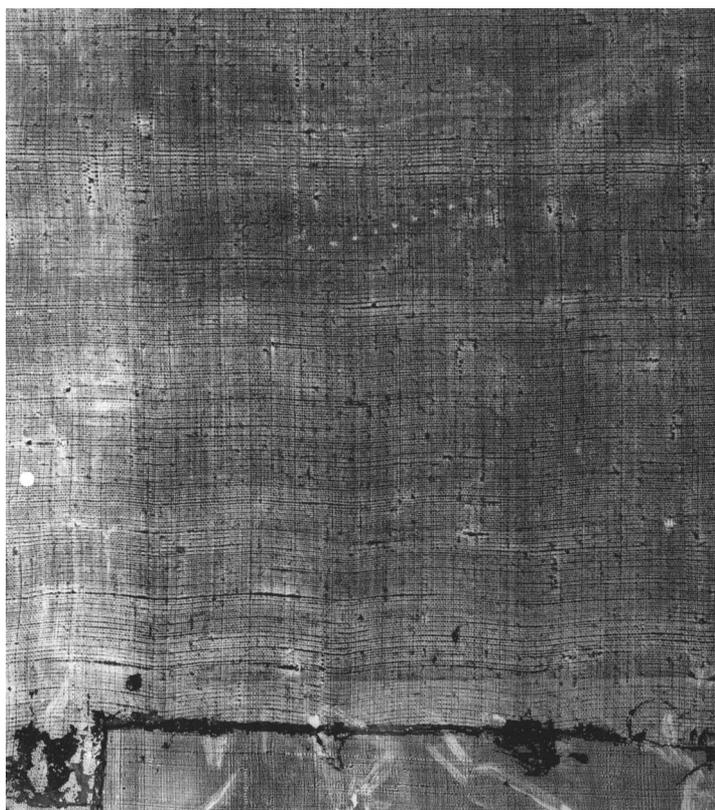
"There also have been many experienced women in the field of painting who are still renowned in our time, and who could compete with men. Among them, one excels exceptionally, Judith Leyster, called 'the true leading star' in art...."<sup>2</sup>

The young artist sits in a remarkably casual manner, with her right arm resting on the back of her chair. As she looks out at the viewer with one hand holding a brush and the other her palette, a large bundle of brushes, and a white painter's cloth, it appears as though she has just been interrupted from her work. Indeed, Leyster has purposely left the figure of the violin player on the canvas in an unfinished state. Nevertheless, she is dressed in quite formal attire, inappropriate for an artist busy working. One could hardly imagine her painting while wearing such a firmly starched, broad, lace-trimmed collar.

The inconsistencies can be explained in the dichotomy that existed between the traditional iconography for artists' self-portraits and the relatively new informal concept of portraiture that had developed in Haarlem in the 1620s through the influence of Frans Hals. It had long been accepted for an artist to depict him or herself dressed in fine clothes before an easel, as, for example, did one of the few successful women artists of the sixteenth century, Catharina van Hemessen (1528–after 1587), in her self-portrait of 1548 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Basel).<sup>3</sup> This tradition developed as artists sought to raise their social status from craftsmen to members of the liberal arts. The parallel that could be drawn between the noble character of painting and the social position of the artist is also evident in Cesare Ripa's insistence that the personification of "Artificio of Konststück" should be dressed in expensive and ingeniously made (*konstigh*) clothes. "He should be dressed ingeniously and nobly because art by itself is noble, which men can also call the second Nature."<sup>4</sup> Leyster abided by this tradition, yet she was also aware of the innovations of the greatest Haarlem portrait painter of the day, Frans Hals. While her brushwork is not as vivacious as that of Hals, the momentary quality of the image, conveyed through informality of pose and open expression, is related to his portrait style of the 1620s.<sup>5</sup>

The exact date of this self-portrait is not known. Hofrichter has argued that Leyster executed it as a presentation piece at the time of her entry into the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke in 1633. The new regulations, which were established in 1631, required that each new master present to the guild "a painting two feet large" as testimony of skill.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, for a number of reasons this attractive

Fig. 1. Detail of x-radiograph of lower left corner of canvas, showing insert, in 1949.6.1





Judith Leyster, *Self-Portrait*, 1649.6.1



Fig. 2. Judith Leyster, *Merry Company*, 1629/1631, oil on canvas, The Netherlands, private collection

hypothesis is probably not correct. First, the costume cannot date that late. This flat, lace-edged style of collar can be found in portraits from the late 1620s but not in the 1630s.<sup>7</sup> The style of the cap, moreover, is extremely close to one in Leyster's *Carousing Couple* (1630, Louvre, Paris, inv. no. R.F. 2131). The smooth modeling of the heads of the women in these two paintings is also extremely close. Their features are somewhat superficially rendered in comparison to the more three-dimensionally conceived genre figures that Leyster painted in the early to mid-1630s.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the painting of a violin player displayed on the easel in the *Self-Portrait* derives from a *Merry Company* that she executed between about 1629 and 1631 (fig. 2). It seems unlikely that she would have returned to this subject in 1633 to demonstrate her abilities for admission to the guild. All of this evidence suggests a date of about 1630 for this work, when Leyster was about twenty-one years old.

Leyster did not initially plan to paint the violin player on the canvas, but rather a portrait of a woman, whose face is visible in an infrared photograph (fig. 3). Following the iconographic tradition of artist portraits at an easel, the woman's portrait

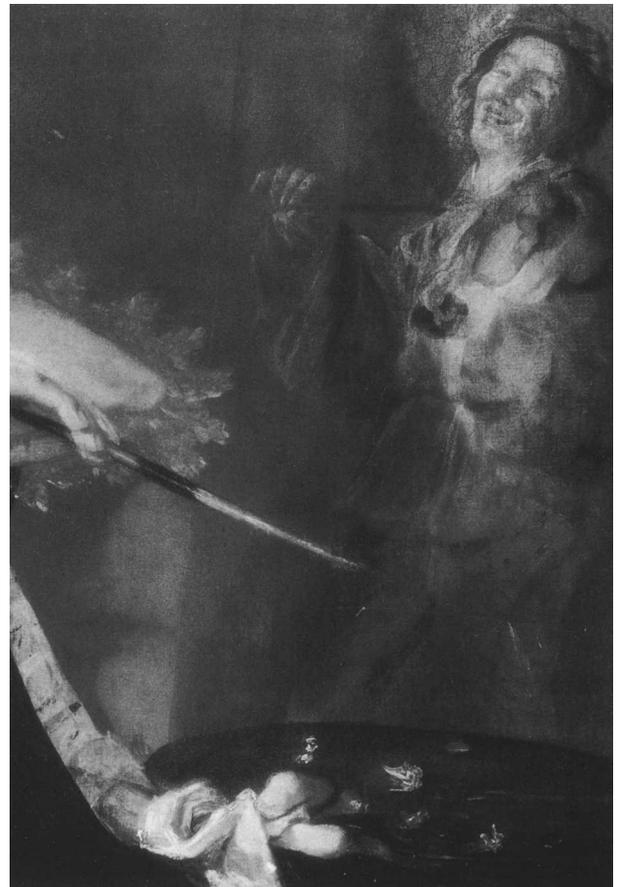
was probably of Leyster herself.<sup>9</sup> She may have decided to depart from that tradition because of the popular success of the *Merry Company* scene from which the violin player derived, or to emphasize her versatility as a painter of both portraits and genre scenes.<sup>10</sup> In any event, the happy disposition of the violin player gives the *Self-Portrait* a joyous character that adds much to its charm.<sup>11</sup>

#### Notes

1. Ampzing 1628, 370, praises Leyster's bold hand and mind in the context of a discussion of the De Grebber family, probably because Frans de Grebber's daughter Maria (c. 1602–1680) was also a painter. The rarity of women artists is implicit in Ampzing's rhetorical question concerning Maria: "Who ever saw a painting made by the hand of a daughter?" ["Wie sag oyt schilderij van eene dochtershand?"]

2. Schrevelius 1648, 384–385. "Daer zyn ook veel Vrouwen gheweest in de Schilder-konst wel ervaren/die voornamelyck by onse tijdt noch vermaert zijn/die met de mans haer soude kunnen versetten in de mael-konst/van welke een insonderheydt uytmunt, JUDITH LEISTER, weleer genaemt/de rechte Leyster inde konst..." The English translation has been taken from Hofrichter 1989, 83. The ref-

Fig. 3. Detail of infrared photograph of 1949.6.1



erence to "the true leading star" is a pun on Leyster's name; see Hofrichter 1989, 13.

3. Illustrated in Raupp 1984, 390, repro. 20.

4. Ripa 1644, 259. "Konstigh en eedel wort hy gekleet, om dat de konst door haer selven eedel is, die men oock de tweede Natuyre kan heeten." For a discussion of this type of self-portraiture, see Raupp 1984, 36–38.

5. For example, Hals' *Isaac Abrabamsz. Massa*, 1626, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, inv. no. 54/31, illustrated in Slive 1970–1974, 2: pl. 64. Although the National Gallery's work was given to Judith Leyster in 1926, many scholars attributed it to Frans Hals during the 1930s (see Exhibited and References).

6. Hofrichter 1983, 106–109. For the guild regulations, see Tavern 1972–1973, 52.

7. A similar style collar is seen in family portraits of the late 1620s, such as Pieter de Grebber's *Family Portrait at a Meal*, 1625 (Stedelijk Museum, Alkmaar); Paulus Bor's *Portrait of the Family Van Vanevelt*, 1628 (Sint Pietersen Blokland Gasthuis, Amersfoort); and Andries van Bochoven's *The Artist and His Family*, 1629 (Centraal Museum, Utrecht). These paintings are illustrated in Haarlem 1986, nos. 72, 74, 75.

8. For example, *Young Flute Player* (inv. no. 1120); see Hofrichter 1989, no. 38.

9. See, for example, Catharina van Hemessen's *Self-Portrait* of 1548 (see note 3).

10. As suggested by Hofrichter 1983, 107.

11. For a discussion of the symbolic implications of the violin player see Raupp 1984, 346–347.

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1965 NGA: 75, no. 1050.  
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## Nicolaes Maes

1634–1693

MAES WAS BORN in Dordrecht in January 1634, the son of a well-to-do soap boiler.<sup>1</sup> The details and dates of his early career are not precisely known, but Houbraken tells us that Maes' first instruction in drawing came from "an ordinary master" (*een gemeen Meester*), probably locally in Dordrecht. At some point in the late 1640s, however, he went to Amsterdam and studied with Rembrandt (q.v.), becoming one of the master's most accomplished pupils.

By the end of 1653, Maes was back in Dordrecht, where he was betrothed on 28 December to Adriana Brouwers, the widow of a preacher. They were married there on 13 January 1654, and had three children (one of whom died young). The influence of Rembrandt, and specifically the style and subject matter of his work of the 1640s, continued in Maes' work after his return to Dordrecht. This influence is espe-

cially strong in the case of his drawings, which are often difficult to distinguish with certainty from those of Rembrandt. Maes produced almost all of his small-scale paintings of domestic interiors during the mid-1650s, one of the two types of picture for which he is best known.

By 1656, Maes began painting portraits, and eventually he became exclusively a fashionable portrait painter. He sought to infuse his depictions of Dutch merchants with an elegance comparable to that found in paintings by Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), and Houbraken relates that Maes actually traveled to Antwerp to study the works of Flemish masters. His own portraits, however, always retained a more literal likeness of the sitter than did those of Van Dyck.

Houbraken attributed the stylistic changes evi-